

Madison County Sheriff's Office Teams with Othram to Identify a 1990 Homicide Victim

After nearly four decades, a murdered woman, whose body was discovered in an Illinois soybean field, has been identified as 39-year-old **Wynona Nadine Michel**.

Solved



Summary

In July 1990, the remains of an unidentified individual were discovered by a road maintenance crew in a soybean field in Troy, Illinois. Troy is a city located in Madison County and is about 20 miles east of St. Louis, Missouri. Troy is considered part of the St. Louis Metropolitan Statistical Area. The Madison County Sheriff's Office responded to the scene and determined that the remains were those of an unclothed white female. The woman was estimated to be between 25 and 35 years old, stood 5'5" tall, and weighed 130 pounds. Investigators believed she had been killed two to three days prior to being discovered, having sustained multiple stab wounds to her neck and torso.

At the time of the woman's discovery, she had red/auburn hair tied in a ponytail and a single piercing in each earlobe, with an upper denture plate. Near the body, investigators found a pink T-shirt with blue palm trees and "Florida" printed on the front, a white bra made in the Philippines, white Pebble Beach sandals with side buckles, and a white metal or silver ring with a heart-shaped turquoise stone that had been worn on her right finger.



Forensic sketches and composites depicting the woman's likeness were developed and released to the public in hopes that it would assist in generated leads about the woman's identity. In March 2016, details of the case were entered into the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) as UP14919. Despite extensive efforts by law enforcement investigators to identify the woman, no matches were found, and the case went unsolved for thirty-five years.

In 2024, the Madison County Sheriff's Office submitted forensic evidence to Othram in The Woodlands, Texas to determine if advanced DNA testing could help identify the woman. Othram scientists successfully developed a DNA extract from the forensic evidence, and then used Forensic-Grade Genome Sequencing® to build a comprehensive genealogical profile for the unknown woman. Othram's in-house forensic genetic genealogy team then used this profile to conduct genetic genealogy research, ultimately providing new investigative leads to law enforcement.



Using this new information, a follow-up investigation was conducted leading investigators to potential relatives of the woman. Reference DNA samples were

collected from the potential relatives and compared to the DNA profile of the unknown woman using KinSNP rapid relationship testing. This investigation led to the positive identification of the woman, who is now known to be Wynona Nadine Michel, born August 23, 1959. She was 30 years old when she was murdered. An investigation into the Michel's murder is underway and anyone with possible information about the crime is urged to call the Madison County Sheriff's Office.

Funding for the advanced DNA testing and forensic genetic genealogy used in this case was provided by NamUs, a national clearinghouse that assists the criminal justice community with the investigation and resolution of missing, unidentified, and unclaimed persons cases across the United States and its territories. NamUs is funded and administered by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) and is managed through a contract with Research Triangle Institute International. We are grateful for the support of RTI, NamUs, and the NIJ.

The identification of Wynona Nadine Michel represents the 10th case in the State of [Illinois](#) where officials have publicly identified an individual using technology developed by Othram.